DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 339 560 RC 018 315

AUTHOR Abu-Rabia, Aref
TITLE Education Development among Bedouin Tribes of the Negev Desert. Paper and Discussion.
PUB DATE 87
NOTE 22p.; Paper presented at the Bi-National Conference on Education of Holland and Israel, "Hagar's Well" (Yeroham, Israel, December 14-19, 1986).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Bilingual Education; Cultural Education; Elementary Secondary Education; *Enrollment; Family Influence; Foreign Countries; *Modernization; Nomads; *Traditionalism; Womens Education
IDENTIFIERS *Bedouins; *Israel (Negev Desert)

ABSTRACT

About 60,000 Bedouins live in the Negev Desert, which comprises 60% of Israel. Of these, about half live in towns, a third live in settlements of huts for all or part of the year, while a sixth continue to follow traditional nomadic practices. The number of Bedouin children enrolled in school has grown from 150 in 1950 to about 16,000 in 1986. Girls make up 40% of the elementary enrollment and 25% of the secondary enrollment. There are 29 elementary and 3 secondary schools in the Negev, staffed by 626 teachers, about half of whom are Bedouins. Traditional values and customs related to family life, marriage, and child rearing are still strong among the Bedouins, and young people are torn between traditional and modern ways. However, formal education is coming to play an important role in Bedouin society, and its value is growing. This paper includes the transcript of a discussion that followed presentation of the paper. Topics covered during the discussion are: (1) polygamy and the rights of half-siblings; (2) the reasons that some Bedouin children do not attend school at all; (3) female education; (4) negative attitudes toward vocational education; (5) the tension between traditionalism and modernization; (6) cultural education; and (7) language of instruction issues (Bedouin dialect, literary Arabic, and Hebrew). (SV)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

EDUCATION DEVELOPMENT AMONG BEDOUIN TRIBES OF THE NEGEV DESERT

by: Mr. Aref Abu-Rabia

1987

HAGAR'S WELL

==========

bi-national conference on education

of

Holland and Israel

Yeroham, December 14-19, 1986

Organised by the Educational Centre Yeroham

Under the auspices of

The Ministry of Education of Holland

The Ministry of Education of Israel

The University Of Amsterdam, Holland

The Ben-Gurion University, Beer-Sheba

The Hebrew University, Jerusalem

The Ramat-Hanegev College, Yeroham

The Municipality of Yeroham

Edited by:

Prof. Lea Dasberg

Shulamith Bamberger

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Aref Abu-Rabia

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

EDUCATION DEVELOPMENT AMONG BEDOUIN TRIBES OF THE NEGEV DESERT

by: Mr. Aref Abu-Rabia

TOPICS:

1. The geographical location of the Bedouin in the Negev, and its impact on educational services to Bedouin children.
2. The school network for Bedouin children.
3. The kindegarten network for Bedouin children.
4. The characteristics of the Bedouin school system.
5. The influence of Bedouin urbanization on the development of the school system.
6. Factors influencing the educational process: Modernization vs. Tradition.

THE AREA OF THE STUDY:

The Negev desert comprises 12,500 sq.km.- which is about 60% of the State of Israel. The Negev Bedouin dwell in an area of 1,000 sq.km. of this, about 400 are range lands. This area is defined as semi-arid and serves the Bedouin population for dwelling, grazing and dry farming. The Negev area varies topographically from flat to rolling hilly. Most of the area is covered with loes soil, but the hills are composed of brown lithosols (Ben-David: 1982). The climatic conditions in the Negev are harsh for the vegetation, but they vary from year to year. The amount of rainfall decreases gradually from north to south.

THE POPULATION:

Bedouin in Arabic is **Badawi**, it is derived from **Badia**, the Arabic word for desert, and it means: inhabitant of the desert. The Bedouin have had three main reasons for migration: looking for water and grass sources for themselves and their livestock; avoiding blood feud; expansion of Islam in the 7th century. The Bedouin arrived in the Negev from the Arab Peninsula and some of them lived in the Negev before the Islamic expansion.

The Bedouin population of the Negev, in 1984, is about 60,000, comprising 30 tribes. About 30,000 live in 5 permanent urban settlements planned by the authorities. Some 20,000 dwell in wooden or tin huts, or concrete block houses, scattered within the various tribal areas. Approximately 10,000 still live in tents and wander with their flocks: sheep, goats and camels. It must be pointed out that some of those who live in huts, and even some of those who dwell in permanent homes, do wander with their flocks during the nomadic season, and return to their permanent homes when the season is over.

SOCIAL STRUCTURE:

The social structure of the tribe, by descending hirarchy, is as follows:

1. The nuclear family, consisting of father, mother and unmarried children.
2. The extended family, consisting of several nuclear families who maintain socio-economic bonds and are related by blood.

3. The sub-tribe, consisting of several extended families, some of them related by blood.

4. The tribe, which is made up of four sub-tribes; it is headed by the leader, called Sheikh.

5. The federation of tribes, which consists of a few tribes, some of which are related by blood and some are not.

The traditional Bedouin family is characterized by the following traits: patrilineal, patrilocal, patriarchal, endogamous and occasionally polygamous. According to Islamic Law, a man can be lawfully wedded to up to four wives simultaneously: "And if ye fear that ye will not deal fairly by the orphans, marry of the women, who seem good to you, two or three or four; and if ye fear that ye cannot do justice (to so many), then one (only) or (the captives) that your right hands possess. Thus it is more likely that ye will not do injustice" (Koran 4:3).

TRADITIONAL CONCEPT OF EDUCATION:

In 1950, the Bedouin population was about 12,000; and the total number of pupils at school was about 150 (Abd-Alkader: 1978). In the 1960s the whole concept of schooling is alien to Bedouin culture. One of the strongest factors is the economic one. From the age of 8, a child is a valuable worker: the boy is quite capable of tending a flock of sheep or goats; the girl can work at a variety of jobs, from collecting fire-wood to cooking and weaving. Among the leading families, it is true, there has been a tradition of education: children of Sheikhs were educated in secondary school in the Galilee, in the north of the state.

Under the impact of modernization on the Bedouins, it is clear that education will play a central role. The Bedouin themselves want their children to be educated. They have seen that education can be a key to material progress. Also, some of the educated Bedouin have returned as teachers, attracting more pupils to the schools.

SCHOOLS:

In 1965 there were about 1,100 Bedouin pupils in 14 primary schools, and only 100 of them were girls. Only 3 of the 14 schools were complete primary schools, which meant that the elder children often had to walk considerable distances to attend the higher classes at these schools. It was no unusual thing for 11 year old boys to walk 8 miles a day, to and from school; some of them rode donkeys; some of the older pupils, from outlying encampments, lived by themselves in tents around the school (Gavron: 1965); some of the pupils lived among families (usually their relatives) who lived near the school.

Apart from studying Islam instead of the Bible, more Arab history than Jewish, and an extra Arabic langauge (the mother tongue) - they learn Hebrew at age 9, and English at age 11 - the Bedouin children study according to the normal elementary syllabus. School day is from 8 to 2, five days a week, from Sunday to Thursday.

SOCIAL CHANGES:

In the social context, the family framework and the authoritative of the father within it are still guarded zealously. Yet, while the super framework of the past was that of the tribe, nowadays the extended family is assuming this position. The economic structure, and the conservation of traditional marriage frameworks, contribute to the strengthening of the extended family. The tight bonds between its members have led to the development of recently built Bedouin settlements on the basis of extended families (Amiran et al: 1976). Many customs related to family life and child rearing are still within the jurisdiction of the tribe. Marriage among the Bedouin generally takes place for girls before the age of 20, and for young men before the age of 25. It has been traditional for the wife to handle all activities connected with the household, the care of children and the animals. Until the advent of formal education, the male children were taught by imitation. Male children traditionally stayed with the mother up to 6 or 8 years, and then followed the father.

Many men leave the settlement for jobs in factories and construction. Some own trucks and are self-employed. For many young men there is a struggle between their desire to adopt modern ways, and their wish to maintain their tradition, customs and ties with the family and the tribe. At the same time, educated young people are taking on more important roles than in the past. Education plays a role in the adaptation of the Bedouin to the socio-economic changes and to a new life style.

SCHOOL ATTENDANCE:

In 1976-77 there were 6,552 Bedouin children attending classes in 22 schools, staffed by 249 teachers (Bernstein-Tarrow: 1978). In the current school year, 1986-87, there are about 16,000 Bedouin pupils, in 29 primary schools and 3 secondary schools, staffed by 626 teachers: 328 are Bedouin from the Negev, and 298 are Arab, from Arab villages and towns in the northern part of Israel. Most Arab teachers prefer teaching in the Bedouin schools in the Negev to unemployment or physical labour.

Up until 1986, there had been a progress in the number of schools and teachers provided, the number of children in the schools, the attendance of girls, the awareness of parents of the importance of education, the willingness of parents to send their children to school and to pay for books, clothing and field trips, the provision of transportation for children, the availability of secondary education, the provision of teacher training for Bedouins (in the Kaye Teachers' College in Beer-Sheba), the provision of audio-visual aids and teachers who use audio-visual methods in teaching.

The Bedouin involvment in education has been growing and has become irreversible. Education plays an important role in Bedouin society. 52% of the teachers are Bedouin, and so are all school principals. A Bedouin family who has a school principal among its members, has a good reputation among all Bedouins of the Negev.

NUMBER AND PERCENTAGE OF BOYS AND GIRLS IN EDUCATION:

1984-1985

grade	boys	girls	% girls
k.garten	565	485	46
1-8	6992	4682	40
9-12	1219	304	20
total	8776	5471	38

total boys + girls = 14247

total pupils 12th grade = 154 boys + 29 girls= 183
% girls= 16

1985-1986

grade	boys	girls	% girls
k.garten	594	487	45
1-8	7345	4975	40
9-12	1386	435	24
total	9325	5897	39

total boys + girls= 15222

total pupils 12th grade= 183 boys + 41 girls= 224
% girls= 18

1986-1987

grade	boys	girls	% girls
k.garten	629	527	45
1-8	7560	5278	40
9-12	1400	505	26
total	9589	6310	40

total boys + girls= 15899

total pupils 12th grade= 216 boys + 72 girls= 288
% girls= 25

DISCUSSION

Prof. Dasberg:

I would like to ask two things. First of all, is there a large number of Bedouin children who do not go to school at all? Secondly, do the families consist of one mother, or are there more wives to one patriarch?

Aref Abu-Rabia:

About the first question: Actually, nobody knows the exact number, but we at the Ministry know that there are some Bedouin children who do not attend school at all. The reasons for some are social, and for others the ecological factors: they cannot arrive at school, since they live far off and they are completely nomadic, they move from one place to another.

The second question: the Bedouin are Moslem, and according to Moslem laws they may have up to four wives. But in 1959, the State of Israel issued a civil law that forbids Moslems and Christians too to have another wife, unless they have a good reason, such as: the first wife cannot have children, she is mentality ill etc. However, the Bedouin do not maintain this civil law, and they found a way to circumvent it. The Israeli Law recognizes the rights of a mistress along with those of the lawful wife; so they figured if this law is good for the jews, it is also good for the Bedouins, and started taking a second and third wife, without registering them as wives, but rather as mistresses, who then even have a right to a salary from the state.

By now there are so many such cases, that the Ministry of Religion is trying to find a way to go back to the old situation, and allow them to legally have more than one wife. In the whole Bedouin population, I think only 2% have more than one wife; but I know some who have two, three and even four.

Prof. Dasberg:
I am interested in it from the point view of the children: half-sisters and half-brothers who grow together - is there a hierarchy in their rights, or do they all have the same rights?

Aref Abu-Rabia:
First of all: against the law of Islam, the Bedouin custom is, that a girl has no right to any heritage. Instead, when she marries, her father or brother give her some gifts. She also has the right to go back and live indefinitely with her family, if she divorced from her husband. The rights, therefore, belong only to the sons and not to the daughters.
Usually, the eldest brother has more rights. The Bedouin do it in a simple way: when the mother gives birth to a child, the father and mother give the child a gift of a sheep or a goat or even a she-camel; at the circumcision they also give the boy a sheep or a goat. By the time he is 20 or 30, he has more sheep and goats than his younger brothers.

There are also common sheep and goats, which belong to the whole family, and which the brothers have to divide among themselves. However, before dividing, they take all the gifts and put them aside. Now, a sheep or a goat which you have had for maybe 20 years, may now have 15, or even 30 "descendants", all of which are first put aside before dividing the rest. So, if you ask the fathers, they will say: all children have the same rights. Usually, the eldest brother goes after his father; if the father is a sheikh, or a respectable man in the tribe, the oldest son will usually follow him. This also goes for some professions; I know, for example somebody who was a traditional healer, and after his death his eldest son became a traditional healer in his tribe.

Dr. Keiny:
About the percentage of girls attending school: maybe it is not only that so many girls start and do not continue, but that within the last 12 years there has been a change. Maybe 12 years ago, when the ones who are now in the 12th grade started school, there wasn't the same percentage of more or less 50-50. So there is progress in this respect.

Aref Abu-Rabia:
I agree with you. As I said, in 1960 we had 1,100 pupils, among which there were only 100 girls. Today, the rate of girls in primary schools is about 40%, in secondary schools it is about 26% and in grade 12 it is only 25%, which means that maybe they only had very few girls 4 years ago. But still, even now, some girls stop after grade 9 or 10 and do not complete the secondary school.

Question:

Because of marriage?

Aref Abu-Rabia:

Either that, or they just stay at home because their parents do not agree that they study in the same class with boys. Also, they may not live in an urban Bedouin settlement, and their parents are afraid to let them travel on the bus or walk.

Dr. Bohrer:

A young woman who gets an education and wants to do something with it - what can she do within the Bedouin community, besides being a teacher? Has it happened? Is it a problem?

B. De Haan:

I also wonder what the boys can do, other than teaching. This morning I heard about teachers and people who work in agriculture, but these are only two professions.

Aref Abu-Rabia:

Most of the girls who complete secondary school go to the Teachers College in Beer-Sheva, where they study for two or three years to be a teacher, either in primary school or kindegarten. Most girls chose this field of work, because it is very respectable in the tribe. Also, they make good money, compared to secretaries or other jobs. Besides, the situation of the job is a very easy one: most of the time you are in the classroom, during the break you stay with other female teachers, and after work you go back home.

In fact, I only know a few who work as secretaries or telephone-operators. I know some who want to study to be a nurse, but the entrance exams are very difficult, not only for Bedouin girls but for Israeli too.
As for the boys, some of those who graduate from secondary school go on to university, but most of them prefer the teachers training college, because it is easier to get accepted there than it is at university. Also, you know that after 3 years you will be a teacher, and that in the Negev there are enough jobs for teachers. As I said, we have more than 600 teachers, and only 50% are Bedouin. Now, when you go to university, it is not only difficult to get accepted, you are also not sure you will be able to teach your subject, and you have to study longer.

B. De Haan:
Is there no vocational education?

Aref Abu-Rabia:
In the secondary school in Tel-Sheva* they have a vocational program, but so far, not only among the Bedouins, but in all secondary schools of Arabs in Israel, the attitude has been, that only unsuccessful pupils go to vocational programs. So there is a negative stigma on it. What we now think of doing is, in 3 of the Bedouin secondary schools, to open new programs such as computers and electronics; this will perhaps attract more pupils and change the stigma of vocational programs in the secondary schools.
* Tel-Sheva is a permanent Bedouin settlement, not far from Yeroham. The Participants of the conference visited the Tel-Sheva; following this lecture, there is a short report of the meeting held with the school staff.

Dr. Dror:

In the Jewish sector, a child has a minumum of three options: the regular goverment school, which generally has the connotation of a secular school; then the government "religious school"; and the third option is the ultra-orthodox independent school. Are those options available to Bedouin children?

Aref Abu-Rabia:

Fortunately we don't have these options.

Dr. Dror:

In other words, the only education the Bedouin children get is from the government.

Aref Abu-Rabia:

Yes, all of it is from the government. But, as there is a program called "Heritage of the Oriental Ethnic Groups", we may introduce, both in primary and secondary school, projects about the Bedouin culture. And I say with full responsibility, that today we have to educate the Bedouin teachers in how to teach their own culture. And I mean the Bedouins, I don't mean the Arabs, who are slightly different in culture and customs.

We have to teach the Bedouin teachers to teach their own culture, because they are at the point of moving from tradition to modernization. Some of them look upon their parents' culture and customs as something that belongs to the past. They feel that they themselves belong to the future, and that they do not need all this. Others hesitate about what to do, and their common sense

tells them that it is best not to deal with problematic issues like this one. They learn about the culture of the Jews, the British, the Duch, the Eskimo - but they are afraid to speak about their own Bedouin culture. Others still, take a certain aspect of the Bedouin tradition - such as: herbal medicine among the Bedouin, hospitality among the Bedouin - and try to deal with it. What I am suggesting now is, to create a special syllabus about the Bedouin culture, because nowadays, children who are born in Bedouin villages like Tel-Sheva, cannot distinguish between a camel and an elephant.

Prof. v.d. Berg:
On the way to Tel-Sheva this morning, we saw a lot of cattle, and I noticed that the flocks were tended mostly by women and girls. I was wondering if the men, perhaps, work outside of the settlements. Have they gone out, like guest-workers? And will this be a first step on the way to permanent settlement?

Aref Abu-Rabia:
If we quote the books, we should say that only men take responsibility for the flocks. But nowadays most of the shepherds are women and their daughters. This is also another reasons why some girls do not attend school. Just now, on my way to Yeroham, I counted ten girls in the age of primary school tending flocks, and I don't believe they go to school, because they were coming from the grazing lands back to the tent. I think we can consider the women and girls who take responsibility for the flock as a

cheap labor. In families of higher status they will hire a male shepherd and pay him; if one of the family does the work, they save money. Another thing is: The men can go out to work and earn money, to government offices, to buy food for the family, and also for the animals during the season when there isn't enough grazing land. About the Bedouins settled along the road to Beer-Sheva, and whether this is a first step towards permanent settlement: if they live in tents, I don't think this is the first phase of settlement, because they wander from one place to another, although they know their lands and in winter they go back there. But if they live in tin shanties or huts, I too believe that this is the first stage of settlement, without their knowing it.

As I said: there are about 60,000 Bedouins in the Negev; 30,000 of them, which is 50%, live in urban settlement; about 20,000 dwell in wooden or tin huts, or in concrete-block houses, which are the first stage of settlement.

Dr. Bohrer:

Do you think that the primary and secondary education of so many Bedouin children has been a factor in the disintegration of tradition?

Aref Abu-Rabia:

I can only assume that the whole subject of education is one way of modernization. You can't have electricity, running water, a telephone, a building, and at the same time keep the sheep, goats and tent. So I think this is the price that they now pay.

However, in spite of what I just said, I think that one of the aims of education is to conserve some aspects of the old culture. We can even not continue to live in a tent, and still maintain some of our culture. The dangerous thing is, not to be aware of our situation, and therefore not to avoid what has happened with some Jewish ethnic groups in Israel, who at the beginning wanted to be completely western; after 20 or 30 years they lost their own culture, and now they are trying to go back to it.

Dr. Gefter:
The Bedouin culture is an oral culture. Coming into a formal school setting, the children become book oriented, writing oriented. Are there any particular pedagogical problems that you come across in this area? your experience could be of use to us too.

Aref Abu-Rabia:
In spite of what you have heard this morning at the school (the Bedouin school in Tel-Sheva), I personally think that the Bedouin language, or dialect, is completely different from the written literary Arabic. This is my own opinion. In primary school, and especially in kindegarten, 1st and even 2nd grade, I think the Bedouin child is suffering. Even when the teachers are themselves Bedouins, the children suffer; and 50% of the teachers are not Bedouin. These teachers speak a village or town dialect, which is different both from the Bedouin dialect and from the literary

Arabic. So the children really are suffering. What I try to tell my students is, that it isn't such a disaster to let our children speak their own dialect up to 3rd grade. They need to adapt to the school, to a new langauge - Arabic - and we cause them a great frustration if we do not let them express themselves in their own language. After all, already in kindegarten we try to teach the children to speak a different langauge.

I would like to tell just one anecdote: a teacher in 1st grade wasn't a Bedouin, but an Arab from the north. A pupil raised his hand and asked "can I go out". "To go out" in own dialect means: to go to a certain place. The teacher told the child: "Not now, you'll go after class". A little later, the child asked again, and got the same answer. Then the teacher suddenly went up to the child and discovered that he had wet his pants. She held him by his ear and brought him to the principal, who asked the child what had happened. The child began to cry, and said: "I asked my teacher once whether I could go to the toilet, and she said no. Second time, she told me: no. Then I couldn't hold it any longer". The teacher cried: "You are a liar, you never asked for permission to go to the toilet, you asked for permission to go out of the class."

BIBLIOGRAPHY:

Abd-Alkader, K. 1978: Education Among The Bedouin Population In The Negev; "Hachinuch" vol. 51.1, pp:94-95.

Amiran, D.H.K., Ben-David, J., Shinar, A. 1976: The Process Of Sedentarization And Settlement Among The Bedouin Of The Negev. Dept. of Geography, Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

Ben-David, J. 1982: Stages In The Sedentarization Of The Negev Bedouin - A Transition from Semi-Nomadic To Settled Population. Ph.D. Thesis, The Hebrew University Of Jerusalem.

Bernstein-Tarrow, N. 1978: Education Of The Bedouin Of The Negev In The Context Of Radical Socio-Economic Change. Compare. vol.8,2, pp:141-147.

Gavron, D. 1965: Education For The Bedouin. New Outlook. vol.8:16, pp:24-28.

The Holy Koran 4:3.

BEDOUIN SCHOOLS DISTRIBUTION (after Barnea 1985)